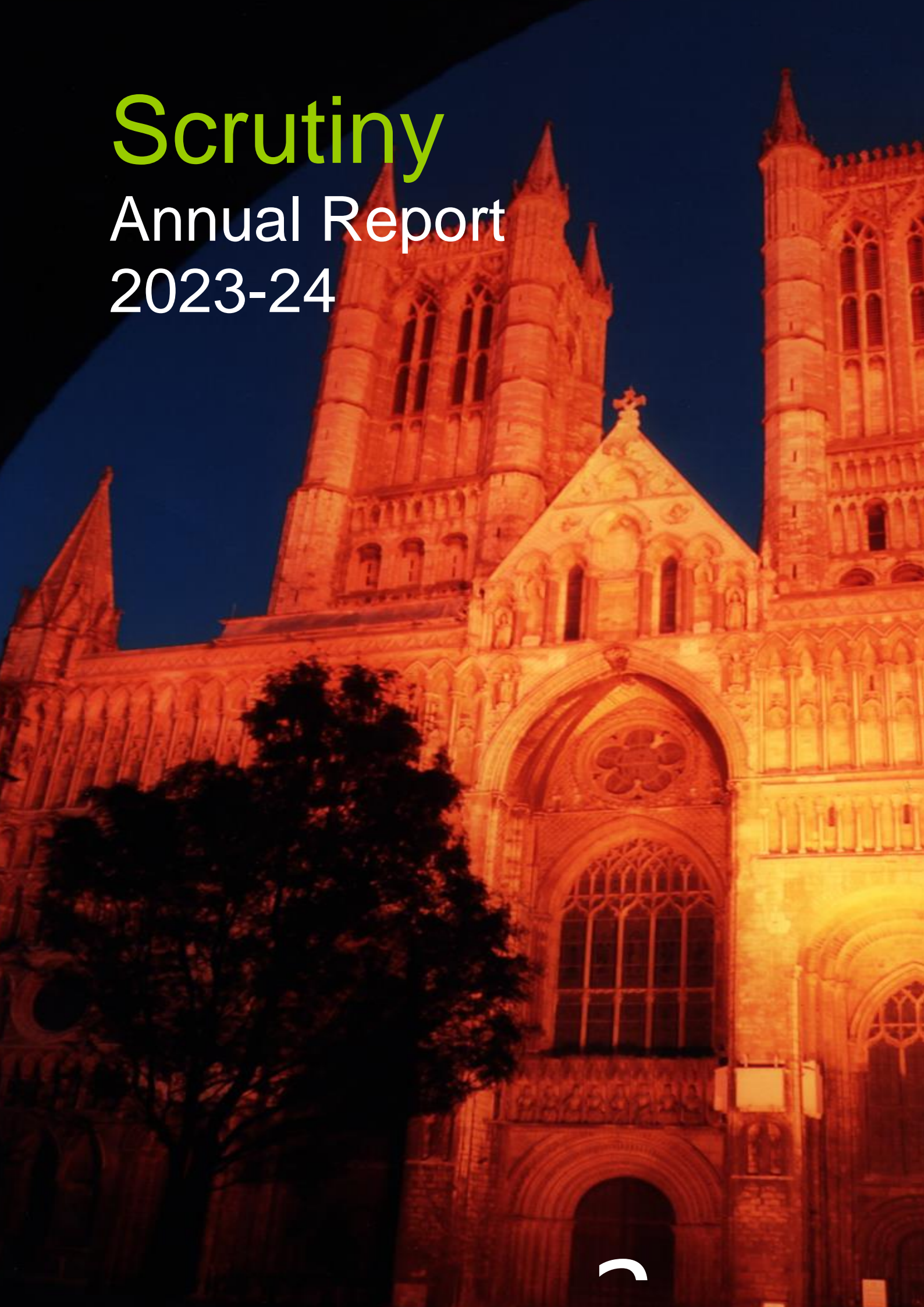


# Scrutiny

## Annual Report 2023-24



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## Introduction

During 2023-24, the City of Lincoln Council continued to operate executive arrangements with its Executive comprising of the Leader of the Council and five other councillors as Portfolio Holders. Most of the Council's decisions are made by the Executive. To improve the quality of the Executive's decisions, Scrutiny Committees remained in place which provided the opportunity for the remaining 27 non-executive councillors to challenge decisions made by the Executive, as well as to help the Executive in reviewing and developing new policies.

This report covers the council year from May 2023 until March 2024.

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## Background to Scrutiny

The scrutiny committee structure is: -

- Performance Scrutiny Committee
  - Policy Scrutiny Committee
  - Community Leadership Scrutiny Committee
  - Select Scrutiny Committee
  - Housing Scrutiny Sub-Committee
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## What Did We Achieve in 2023/24?

The Council appointed the following scrutiny Committees for 2023/24:

Overview and Scrutiny Committee	Chair
Community Leadership Scrutiny Committee	Councillor Calum Watt
Performance Scrutiny Committee	Councillor Gary Hewson
Policy Scrutiny Committee	Councillor Emily Wood
Select Scrutiny Committee	Councillor Calum Watt
Housing Scrutiny Sub Committee*	Councillor Gary Hewson

\*The Housing Scrutiny Sub Committee is a sub-committee of the Performance Scrutiny Committee and reports to this Committee on a quarterly basis.

With the exception of the Select Scrutiny Committee, the work programmes for these scrutiny committees were formally approved by the respective Committees in June 2023 and regularly updated throughout the Council year after this time.

The Select Scrutiny Committee meets once each year as the statutory Crime and Disorder Committee, as well as considering any call-in requests made throughout the year.

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This report identifies some of the key achievements made by the committees.

Current work programmes for scrutiny committees can be found on the Council's website.

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## **Community Leadership Scrutiny Committee**

Between June 2023 and March 2024, the Community Leadership Scrutiny Committee met on five occasions and focused on the following topics:

- Low Wages in the City of Lincoln
- Cultural Consortium Update
- Sheltering Our Citizens
- Poverty Truth Commission Update
- Crisis and Acute Mental Health Provision in Lincolnshire
- Care of Veterans in Lincoln
- Youth Engagement Update

In addition to the Council's Executive and its senior and front-line officers, external contributors included:

- Rob Johnson, Policy and Campaigns Officer - Trades Union Congress Midlands)
- Simon Beardsley, Managing Director - Lincoln Business Improvement Group (BIG) & Chief Executive Officer - Lincolnshire Chamber of Commerce
- Caroline Killeavy, Chief Executive Officer - YMCA
- Heidi Walton, Chief Executive - LEAP Housing
- Claire McGonigle, Deputy Chief Executive - Framework Lincolnshire
- Sandra Blow, Operations Manager - Framework Lincolnshire
- Charlotte Brooks, Director for Local Change - Local Motion
- Vicky Henderson, Community Commissioner - Local Motion
- Tinashe Chipawe, Community Commissioner - Local Motion
- Graham Metcalfe, Partnership Manager - Department for Work and Pensions
- Sarah Connery, Chief Executive Officer - Lincolnshire Partnership Foundation Trust (LPFT)
- Christopher Higgins, Director of Operations - Lincolnshire Partnership Foundation Trust (LPFT)
- Frank Barrett MBE - Royal Air Forces Association (RAFA)
- Evelyn Moorland - Royal Air Forces Association (RAFA)
- Ian O'Conner - Royal Naval Association & Royal British Legion

The Committee recorded its thanks to all its contributors and Council staff who stayed for long and sometimes late meetings during the year, and whose contributions were so helpful and enlightening.

The Committee's recommendations concerned a variety of topics such as the consideration of the rate of pay growth within Lincolnshire, the Cultural Consortium -

a significant number of events had been held over the last six to eight months to drive culture within the City, the provision of emergency accommodation in the City of Lincoln, an update on the Poverty Truth Commission and Crisis and Acute Mental Health Provision in Lincolnshire.

The Committee scrutinised the Care of Veterans in Lincoln and noted the progress that had been made with youth engagement.

Discussions also took place around emergency accommodation within the City of Lincoln and the need for a collaborative and holistic approach to this issue.

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## **Performance Scrutiny Committee**

As part of the Performance Scrutiny Committee's remit, it held regular 'Portfolio under Scrutiny' sessions, where Portfolio Holders were invited to report on service achievements under their portfolio. Members were then able to ask questions about the performance of these service areas. The consideration of portfolio reports included a list of each Portfolio Holders responsibilities to allow members to focus on the relevant performance information relating to the appropriate member's portfolio.

Performance Scrutiny Committee received the minutes of it's Housing Scrutiny Sub-Committee meetings for information.

In addition to the regular scrutiny of portfolio holders, the Committee received reports in the following areas:

- Quarterly financial monitoring to provide members with a summary of actual income and expenditure compared to the revised budget and appropriate allocation of any surpluses to reserves.
- Quarterly performance update reports to ensure regular monitoring of the Council's operational performance as a key component of the Local Performance Management Framework.
- A quarterly review of the Strategic Risk Register - what improvements or issues have been identified.
- A quarterly report on Treasury Management and Actual Prudential Indicators as a requirement of the Council's reporting procedures under regulations issued under the Local Government Act 2003.
- An annual report detailing progress made by the Central Lincolnshire Joint Strategic Planning Committee.
- An update report on Section 106 contributions.
- Income and arrears monitoring reports providing updates to members on the position with regard to amounts of monies owed to the City Council as of 1<sup>st</sup> April 2023.
- Revenues and Benefits performance updates providing members with an update on performance in the Revenues and Benefits Shared Service.
- Strategic Performance Measures and Targets 2024/25 - for review prior to being presented to Executive for consideration.

Members took part in the budget review process for the scrutiny of the proposed budget and Council Tax for the 2024/25 financial year and the Medium Term



Financial Strategy 2024-2029, undertaken in two separate stages; firstly all members were invited to a briefing session to afford all members the opportunity to gain a greater understanding and awareness of the Council's financial position, thus aiding further scrutiny of the budget and in the case of the opposition party if desired the preparation of an alternative budget. This was followed by a more traditional scrutiny process undertaken to review in more detail the MTFs and the robustness of the proposed budget options and Council Tax for the 2024/25 financial year. This was undertaken in a committee format as the Budget Review Group with the appropriate governance arrangements in place.

The Committee held scrutiny reviews during the 2023/24 year in respect of:

#### Lincoln's Citizens Panel Review

A report was presented to members on the Councils approach to refreshing the membership of the Lincoln Citizens' Panel

The membership of the Lincoln Citizens' Panel was most recently reviewed in 2018, and currently contained 722 members. Of those members, 304 continued to actively participate in Panel activities. Currently there was 418 Panel members who had been inactive for more than twelve months. A proposal was put forward for the Citizens' Panel to be reviewed and refreshed at more frequent intervals, with a proportional change of membership either annually or every two years.

#### Minute Extract - Executive – 24 July 2023 – Purchase Orders

Members received a response from Executive in relation to the comments and concerns raised at Performance Scrutiny Committee regarding purchase orders.

#### Addressing the Challenge of Climate Change Vision 2025 Progress Report

A report was presented to Performance Scrutiny Committee on the strategic priority contained in Vision 2025 called 'addressing the challenge of climate change'.

This report provided an update on the progress of the group in addressing climate change and its strategic priority aspirations.

#### Vision 2025 - Remarkable Place Progress Report

This report focused on progress made on the Let's enhance our remarkable place strategic priority, and covered those projects delivered/ being progressed as part of the delivery plan. It represented a high-level summary, designed to give Members a quick overview of the entire programme.

#### Fire Safety

A report was presented to members on the current position regarding Fire Safety to the housing stock including high rise tower blocks, supported housing schemes and low risk flats.

The report focused on Fire Risk Assessments (FRA) that had been carried out on high-rise and low-rise tower blocks and their review frequencies. A buildings Safety

case was currently underway through the Building Safety Act to be completed by early 2024.

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## **Policy Scrutiny Committee**

During 2023/24, the Committee met five times, principally to scrutinise decisions due to be taken by the Executive or Council. The Committee provided its insights and recommendations on a variety of topics, which were suitably reflected in the eventual decision-making process.

The Committee scrutinised the following topics in particular detail:

### Proposals for Extension of Existing Public Space Protection Order at Lucy Tower, Broadgate and Lincoln Central Multi Storey Car Parks

The Committee was presented with a report to consider the extension of an existing Public Space Protection Order (PSPO) at Lucy Tower, Broadgate and Lincoln Central Multi-Storey Carparks prior to approval by Executive.

Committee considered the current PSPO that was in place and the prohibited behaviours within the designated areas. They were provided with details of the consultation with both public and partner agencies where five responses had been received which had all called for the PSPO to remain in place. Evidence that had been gathered from Lincolnshire Police, the CCTV team and the Car Parking Team were also presented to committee for consideration.

The committee discussed the contents of the report in detail and supported the proposal to extend the current PSPO without variations to the prohibition or location and referred to Executive for approval.

### Waste Collection and Street Cleansing Specifications (For new contracts from 01/09/2026)

The committee were presented with an update on the specification of the waste collection and street cleansing contract prior to commencing procurement. The new contracts would commence on 1<sup>st</sup> September 2026 and would be realigned and packaged as two separate contracts: waste (which included recycling and other domestic waste streams) and street cleansing, and a separate grounds maintenance contract. Members were presented with a list of material changes that had been made to the specification that were noticeable to service users, there were many other changes that had been made in the interests of cost control, clarity, ease of navigation, ease of operational use and understanding. An all member workshop had taken place and the actions taken to address the issues raised at the workshop and the anticipated cost implications were considered by committee members. It was also noted that the Council required its contractors to pay their staff in accordance with the real living wage as a minimum.

The committee considered the report and a discussion ensued, many questioned were asked and detailed responses received. The committee supported the

proposed specification of the waste and street cleansing contract and referred it to Executive for consideration.

### Safeguarding and Protecting Vulnerable People Policy

The committee were presented with the revised Safeguarding and Protecting Vulnerable People Policy for feedback prior to consideration by Executive. The report was an updated version of existing policies and framework to fulfil statutory duties and demonstrate safeguarding competence and compliance following a full review.

The key policy changes were carefully considered by Committee and they supported the updated policy.

In addition to the key topics, the Committee also scrutinised the following items and forwarded its comments for consideration by the Executive:

- Protecting Vulnerable People
- Events and Culture – Christmas in Lincoln 2023 and beyond – Programme of Events
- Lincoln Central Market Policies
- Localised Council Tax Support Scheme 2024/25
- Corporate Document Review 2023
- Proposals for the Extension of Existing Public Space in the City Centre
- Proposal to Increase Fixed Penalty Notices in Relation to Environmental Crime
- Renewal of Regulation 7 Direction of Lettings Boards
- Parks and Open Spaces – Income Policy

Minutes of these meetings are available on the City of Lincoln Council website which includes details about discussions that took place and questions asked by Members and responses received.

The Committee also received regular updates from the Health Scrutiny Committee.

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## **Select Scrutiny Committee**

The principal functions of the Select Scrutiny Committee are to meet once per year as the Crime and Disorder Committee; and to consider any requests for the call-in of Executive decisions, which allows scrutiny members to challenge a decision made by the Executive or any of its individual portfolio holders, prior to the implementation. This gives the Select Scrutiny Committee the opportunity to examine a decision where particular concerns have been raised and respond accordingly.

There were no call-in requests during 2023/24.

The Committee sat as the Crime and Disorder Committee on 17 July 2024.

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## Housing Scrutiny Sub-Committee

The Housing Scrutiny Sub-Committee is a sub-committee of Performance Scrutiny Committee. It was established in 2008 to increase engagement between backbench Members and Tenant Advisory Panel representatives. The Sub-Committee has continued to meet and tenants on the Committee consider that it has helped them have their say when scrutinising housing matters.

The Chair of Lincoln Tenants Panel provided a regular written report on the panel's continued work on a variety of projects with officers in the Housing Service.

Over the last twelve years the Council had been working with Lincoln Tenants Panel to improve external scrutiny and to meet standards implemented by the Tenant Services Authority.

From April 2010 all social landlords were required to have local offers in place alongside the national standards as set out in the new Regulatory Framework for Social Housing, which was amended with effect from April 2012 although the principles remained the same.

The Committee met five times during 2023/24 and considered many reports which included the following topics:

- Housing Finance
- Scheduled Repairs
- Housing Fire Assessment
- Scheduled Repairs
- Allocations Updates
- Downsizing Policy
- Housing Planned Works 2023-24
- Anti-Social Behaviour Management
- Management of Communal Areas
- Ellie's Memorial Garden
- Repairs Policy
- De Wint Court Post Implementation Review
- Tenant Involvement Strategy 2022-23
- Housing Revenue Account Business Plan 2024/25
- Aids and Adaptations Policy
- Estate Inspections- Feedback Process
- Work of Tenancy Sustainability Team
- Review of Empty Garages
- Review of Pet Policy
- Tenancy Policy/Strategy
- Adi's Legacy/Hartsholme Community Garden
- Target Setting 2024/25
- Report by Councillor Donald Nannestad, Portfolio Holder for Quality Housing
- Update on Insurance Claims for Disrepair Claims Lodged
- Tenant Involvement Strategy Action Plan



The Committee also effectively scrutinised Housing performance on a quarterly basis and received regular updates on the progress of the Lincoln Tenants Panel.

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## **Contact Us**

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